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ABSTRACT

A case study of The Free University of Iran, an Open University school with a distance learning system, is presented. Areas of discussion include characteristics of the country, the educational system of Iran, and the university. Specific topics include: the physical setting of Iran; the population; society and culture; economic development and educational planning; four stages in the development of Iran's education system; origins of the Free University of Iran; the entrance examination; courses; the teacher education program; the health sciences program; the rural development program; the technician training program; instructional media and methods; programmed printed texts; broadcast material; home experiment kits; text production; broadcast and audiovisual production; delivery systems; student admission and registration; the study year; student enrollment; staffing patterns and structure; local study centers; three types of student assessment; and organization and administration of the university. (SW)

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THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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# A case study in distance learning systems:

# THE FREE UNIVERSITY OF IRAN

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Stephanie Goodenough
October 1978

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# The Free University of Iran

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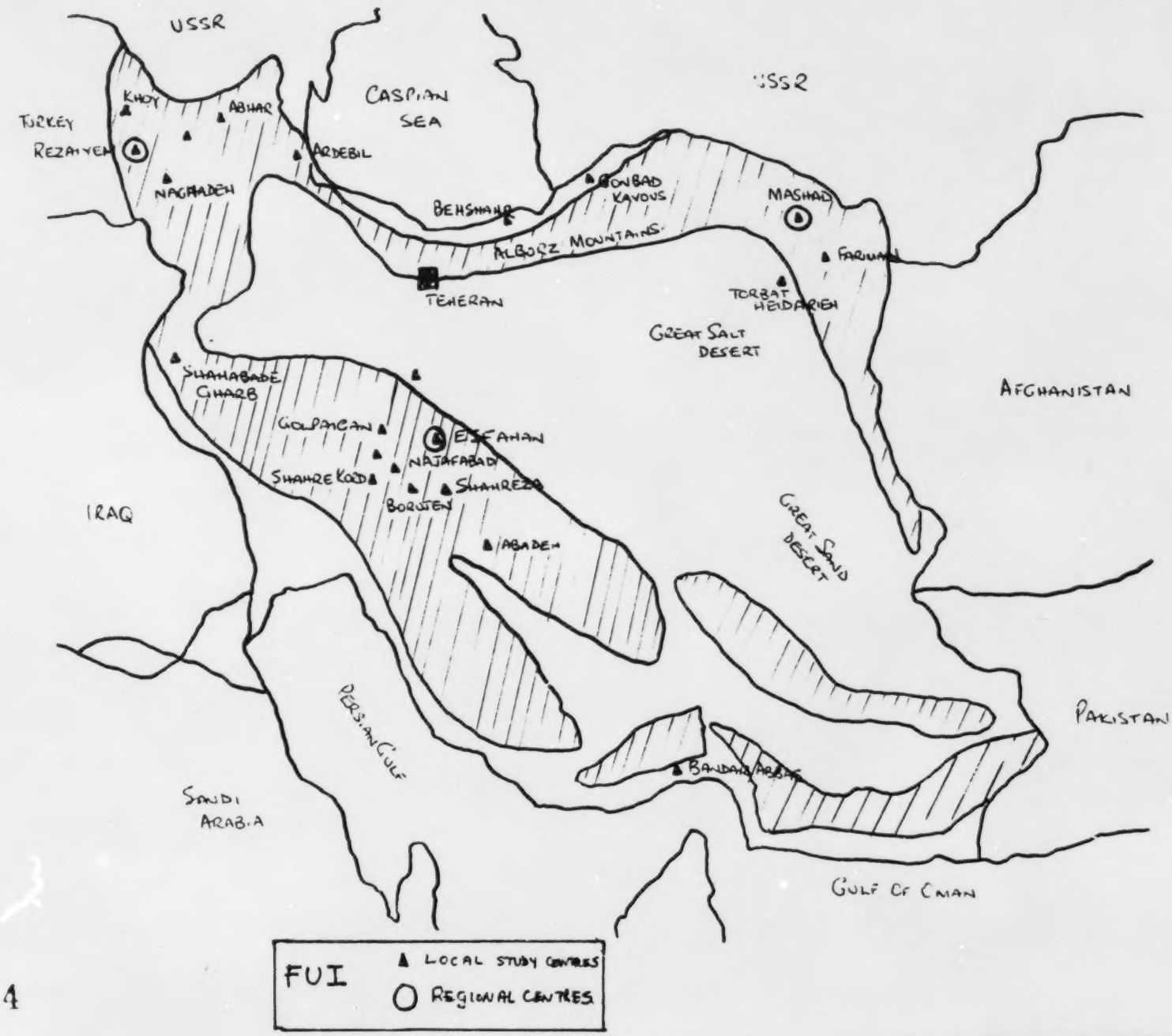
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PAKISTAN
BANDAR ABBAS
SAUDI ARABIA
GULF OF OMAN
FUI
LOCAL STUDY CENTRES
REGIONAL CENTRES

PART A

IRAN

Physical Setting

Iran is a vast country which dominates the Middle East. It is bounded by the Soviet Union and the Caspian Sea in the North, by Afghanistan and Pakistan to the East, by the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman to the South and to the West by Iraq and Turkey.

Geographical and communications problems are considerable. Covering an area of 628,000 square miles, equivalent to the size of England, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, distances from one centre to another are large. One third of the country consists of mountains, one third of deserts and one third is made up of forests, arable or pastoral land. The deserts, especially the Dasht-e-Lut which supports no life whatsoever, are among the most arid in the world, and the central plateau of the country is partly covered by a great salt desert (Kavir), treacherously swampy in parts, much of which remains unexplored. Around the desert regions are hills and mountains. While 55% of the surface area is between 300 and 1500 metres high 36% is over 1500 metres. The result is that most settlements are on the edge of the deserts or in the foothills and attempts to locate a good central site for the capital have proved impossible. The choice of Tehran as the capital city only dates from the end of the Eighteenth Century. The subtropical Caspian littoral, Khorassan province in the East, the North Western province of Azerbaijan (Azerbadegan) and Kermanshah in the West, are among the most fertile and agriculturally developed areas but there are important areas of fertility around Isfahan and Shiraz and in Khuzestan, and even large areas of Baluchistan are known to be fertile given good irrigation. Elsewhere crop yield is low through lack of water and extremes of temperature.

Except in the Caspian and Southern coastal plains humidity is low. Temperatures vary from region to region, from very hot ($55^{\circ}C$ to $130^{\circ}F$) in Khuzestan in summer to very cold in the Elborz mountains in winter, and in the west round Kermanshah and Hamadan. With the exception of the Caspian coastal regions which can receive up to 80 inches of rain per year, rainfall is slight.

Good road links exist between Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan, with rail links to Turkey and the Soviet Union. Tehran is a principal stop-over for airlines flying between Europe and the Far East, and there is a well-organised domestic airline which is much used because of the great distances between the major centres and the inadequacy of internal surface communications, particularly to the South East parts of the country. A reasonable network of roads and railways links Tehran with the North East (Mashad), North West (Tabriz), West (Kermanshah) and South West (Abadan, Shiraz), but between other centres communications are variable, and in winter are impeded by heavy snowfalls on high ground. Distance and inaccessibility are among the major obstacles facing administrators in this vast country. The South-eastern provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan represent a particularly severe problem for these reasons and strenuous efforts are being made to improve communications and to develop the area.

Population

Iranians are an Indo-European not an Arabian people, intensely proud of their long history. The estimated population today is 35,000,000 (1976 33,591,875) with at least 9,000,000 under the age of 15 years. A declining death rate, due to improvements in public health, a reduction in malnutrition and famine and the eradication of malaria, plus an increasing fertility rate are expected to produce a population of 70,000,000 by 1995. With family planning, a recent report suggested it could be held at 53.4 million. With this extremely youthful population the government regards these projections very seriously and a major family planning programme is being undertaken.

Population is concentrated in the fertile north and in the cities. Tehran is approaching 4.5 million and the urban population is increasing relative to the rural by about 1% per year. There are some 60,000 rural communities, many of them very small and dispersed. Amongst the rural population are some 750,000 nomads, who have since the 1940's declined Governemnt attempts to settle them.

The principal implications of the physical and social structure of Iran are:

(a) the increasingly heavy demands made by a youthful population and
(b) the difficulties of supplying education to a widely scattered rural population.

These factors led to the development of a Literacy Corps. By 1970 65% of the urban population were literate but only 15% of the rural group, despite the efforts of the Literacy Corps. Considerable interest has been shown in

mass media as potential solutions to these pressing problems, but the use of such media are just as fraught with problems.

For instance, there are many linguistic and ethnic groups in addition to the dominant Farsis. These include Turks, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Kurds, Turkomans and Baluchis. There are other tribal people and nomadic groups. While diversity of language is not encouraged some groups have established schools in their own tongue. Persian (Farsi) is the only official language taught or used in most schools and universities (except for some English and French medium institutions).

Linguistic diversity undoubtedly hinders the ambitious literacy programme since this is being carried out mainly through the medium of Persian, a language by no means universally known by the minority peoples. On the other hand the majority of illiterates are Farsi speakers and great strides have been made since the creation of the UNESCO sponsored International Institute of Adult Literacy near Tehran (1969) in reducing the rates of illiteracy. Currently 50% of the 10-44 age group are classified as illiterate; by 1985 it is hoped to have reduced this to single figures.

English is the principal scientific, commercial and educational foreign language, having over the last 20 years left French far behind. Too often it is not well taught in the schools and the demand for tuition from young adults in the towns is enormous. Nevertheless 97% of all high school pupils study English and all university students must undertake 2 years of foreign language study (usually English) as part of their degree course.

## Society and Culture

Iran, like other Middle Eastern countries, is emerging slowly and sometimes painfully from a traditional Islamic society to a modern industrial one, though evidence of the change is more apparent in the urban areas than the remoter villages. Traditional characteristics like extravagant generousity, elaborate politeness, strong family ties and respect for elders compete with the increasingly competitive and aggressive instincts so often found in urban societies. Whereas women have an important role to play in social development it is still only in the cities that they can begin to compete with men. In rural areas it is still difficult for women to break away from their traditional role.

Iranians take a justifiable pride in their history and in the achievements that have been made during the past decade or so. This leads to a natural dichotomy facing many countries. How far is the process of modernization and the absorption of Western technological skills and know-how and the provision of consumer

durable goods compatible with the furtherance of national ideals and traditions? In Iran, Western technology and Western goods tend to be readily adopted while Western social and ethical values are accepted by only a few. In an effort to redress western influence great emphasis is to be placed on the study of Iranian ideals and traditions at all levels of education.

Nevertheless, in spite of the inherent dangers in being educated in institutions in Western countries, many students continue to be sent overseas for their education. There are currently over 40,000 students studying abroad. Many of these will choose to stay though the government is introducing generous inducements to get them to return.

Iran is predominantly a Muslim country, about 90% of the population belong to the Shi'ite sect. There is a genuine tolerance of other religions though active proselytising is not encouraged and exponents of the Bahai faith are not warmly regarded by the authorities. Similarly Christian mission schools have been taken over by the government. Nevertheless there is a sizeable Armenian Christian community in Tehran, Isfahan and elsewhere, and Christian hospitals are also active. Inevitably, as modernisation takes place secular values are encroaching upon traditional religious viewpoints. Even so Islamic influence is still very much in evidence in the educational scene: rote learning persists; girls have fewer opportunities than boys, though this situation is changing; adolescents are not usually taught by members of the opposite sex and madrassehs and Islamic schools are still to be found.

## Economic Development and Educational Planning

The present Shah's regime has been marred from the beginning (1941) by internal disorder and political unrest, especially through the 1950's with the growth of the pro-Communist Tudeh party. In spite of, or perhaps because of this America and other western powers have invested heavily in Iran. Between 1945 and 1960 over $800 million were poured into the country. As a result of this, and the Shah's determination to see Iran as the Japan of the Middle East, Iran today is in the middle of an economic and social revolution

In purely economic terms progress has been startling. GNP rose rapidly at the rate of 12% per annum during the Fourth Development Plan period (1968-1973) and GNP per capita has risen from $200 in 1963 to $1600 in 1976. In fact after the increase in oil prices announced in December 1973 it was suggested that GNP had been rising at 50% per annum! A more conservative projection for the period 1973-78 of the Fifth Development Plan was for a 25.9% per annum rise in GNP.

This has not materialised. The vast oil reserves have been quickly syphoned off into a number of ambitious development projects some of which are now running short of funds.

The White Revolution has been substantiated by a series of Development Plans designed to boost different sectors of the economy. The Third and Fourth Development Plans for example concentrated on the development of industry, the oil industry in particular. The Fifth Development Plan however, apart from being greater in scope than all the previous plans put together - (total expenditure is now estimated at $122,800 million, having expanded fourfold as a result of the increased oil revenues) - concentrates primarily on education and social reform, closely followed by industry and agriculture as the key areas for development. In fact it would be fair to say that the Iranian government's commitment to educational development - vide the Shah's White Revolution, the Charter of Educational Revolution (1968) and the Fifth Development Plan - is wholehearted. Nevertheless it realises that there is much within the present educational system that inhibits social development and recognises the need for reform. The main development aims of the Fifth Plan can be listed as follows:

(a) to raise the level of knowledge, culture, health and welfare of the people
(b) to achieve a fairer distribution of income
(c) to sustain economic growth
(d) to reduce concealed or seasonal unemployment
(e) to develop a better socio-economic balance between regions
(f) to increase productivity and efficiency
(g) to improve administration and defence
(h) to protect and improve the environment
(i) to increase trade.

The main educational priorities of the Fifth Plan are the training of scientific and technical manpower for the rapidly expanding industrial sector; the use of the mass communication media to bridge the urban/rural gaps; the expansion of research into educational problems; and the eradication of illiteracy. This is still estimated at over 50% of the population (cf 71% in 1966) between the ages of 10 and 44. As to be expected urban rates of literacy (65%) are far higher than those in rural areas (15%). On the other hand it is believed that only 20% of the urban school age population (6-16) are illiterate so progress is undoubtedly being made. The Shah has also pledged that every child shall receive a free elementary education by the end of the current Plan period, even though this will require an additional 56,000 teachers and 9,000 schools. Special

attention is being given to the development of education in hitherto neglected regions such as Sistan and Baluchestan.

In spite of such ambitious schemes, however, Iran still suffers from many of the familiar symptoms of under-development: illiteracy, which has already been mentioned, a slow-moving bureaucracy, conservative attitudes, air conditioned planning, the gap between promise and performance, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural sectors. It is estimated that barely 10% of the population control 40% fo the nation's wealth, and the bottom 30% share only 3% of it. The average per capita income rose to $1600 in 1976, but the dweller in a rural area is unlikely to have had much share in this.

Agriculture is still the principal economic activity for the majority of the Iranian people, but although it employs 40% of the total labour force it accounts for only about 20% of the national income. It is still the least-developed sector of the economy despite its importance and for this reason has been given a higher priority rating in the current Development Plan.

As part of the process of rural development the Shah has initiated several experiments to bring an illiterate feudal people into the mid-twentieth century. The first of these, the Literacy Corps, was designed to combat the 86% illiteracy rate in rural areas. Secondary school graduates could opt to spend their period of national service as teachers working in villages. After a 6-month period of intensive training, including military training, the Corps members then spend 18 months in the rural areas. Until 1968, only men were allowed in the Corps but it is now a common sight to see young men and women in their khaki uniforms working in the villages. By 1973 50,000 villages had been reached, 11,000 schools established and special textbooks distributed to over 450,000 students. So successful has the Literacy Corps been that other corps, the Health Corps and the Agricultural Extension Corps, have also been established. All three groups tend to work as a team in the process of aiding rural development.

Perhaps the most chronic brake on Iranian economic development however, is the lack of skilled manpower. The current Five Year Plan is expected to generate 2.1 million additional jobs yet on an optimistic assessment only 1.4 million Iranians will be qualified to fill them - leaving an estimated short-fall of over 720,000. The present shortage of doctors is estimated at 23,000, engineers at 16,000, teachers at 57,000, technicians at 42,000 and skilled and semi-skilled workers at 560,000. Some, but by no means all, of these jobs can be filled by foreign personnel.

The problem is exacerbated by the "brain-drain" of qualified doctors, engineers, surgeons, dentists, etc to Europe and the United States. A recent Iranian government survey (The Brain Drain in Iran) estimated that nearly 11,500 qualified Iranians were working overseas. 90% of them (ie 10,000) are doctors, ie equal to the number of doctors actually working in Iran. March 1975 figures showed there were only 10,000 medical practitioners in Iran (excluding those working in the armed forces) of whom over 4,000 worked in Tehran. To achieve the WHO target of 1 doctor : 1000 patients Iran needs an additional 33,000 doctors. Figures for dentists are even more disturbing. Of the 1273 qualified dentists in Iran in March 1975 824 were working in Tehran, resulting in total lack of dental care for the majority of the rural population. Accordingly the government has undertaken research into the reasons for this brain drain and possible solutions. It has come up with several recommendations which it is proceeding to implement: the abolition of military service for qualified specialist staff; the increase of funds allocated for research; the full recognition of German medical qualifications in order to attract back the 3,000 plus Iranian doctors in Germany; offering very large salary inducements (£600 per month) to attract back personnel to government as opposed to private service; promises of easing government bureaucracy and domestic fringe benefits etc. Certainly if staff could be attracted back, Iran's qualified manpower shortage would be considerably eased. How feasible this is in the present political situation is debatable.

It is to help alleviate these bottlenecks to development that the FUI was established and encouraged to devise suitable programmes of courses.

PART B

## The Education System

The goals of the Iranian education system were generally prescribed in the documents of the White Revolution in January 1963 and, for higher education in particular, in the Charter of the Educational Revolution of August 1968. Objectives, targets, priorities and policies are laid down in the national Five Year Plans (Budget and Plan Organisation).

Considering these sources, the overall aims may be summarised thus:

1. the progressive education, social and cognitive, of the entire population, including the eradication of illiteracy and the establishment of free compulsory elementary education for all the relevant age-groups;
2. the establishment of equality of educational opportunity for girls as for boys, for rural as for urban children, and for the poor and socially-deprived as for the wealthy.
3. the development of the skills required to meet national development goals in all sectors of the economy, especially the modern sector, in pursuance of the aim of securing national independence (ie independence in food production, defence, industrial development).

The development of Iran's education system displays four stages:

(i) Islamic schools
(ii) Military/technical academies and high schools
(iii) Primary, secondary and higher institutions available almost exclusively to the urban rich (up to 1943)
(iv) Universal education (not yet achieved).

Although these stages have progressively replaced each other, vestiges of tradition remain. From the Islamic schools stems an emphasis on rote learning and discouragement of independent thought. The earlier elitist stages were influenced dramatically by western models, French and later English, both of which viewed education as a preparation for gaining certificates. The most

recent official policies are attempting to counteract such tendencies and place a strong emphasis on technical rather than just academic aptitudes and on the production of marketable skills.

However, pupils and parents alike regard education as a means of acquiring a certificate. The material rewards to degree-holders are great: in 1969 their average earnings were four times those of primary leavers, over five times those of illiterates. Hence urban pupils and parents maintain a heavy pressure on the system to expand access to secondary and higher education, to lower standards and to preserve existing curricula and methods, irrespective of the real needs of the country and the consumers themselves. The implementation of the Fifth Plan policies of damping down expansion of academic secondary and higher education and of expanding primary, technical and vocational and teacher education, may well intensify these social pressures. For those in rural areas, where the possibility of access to higher education is even more remote, education beyond the literacy level must seem an impossible dream. Indeed this may explain why some rural parents are antagonistic to education, especially for girls. In short, the actual education system - which remains degree-oriented, competitive and academic rather than practical - is at considerable variance with the stated objectives of national development.

Iran's system of school education was modified only a few years ago: the present system is in transition between the old and the new and hence rather difficult to describe precisely. The old system included 6 years primary education, 6 years secondary education (3 lower, 3 upper, with a distinct break after the former at Grade 9). All the children in secondary schools in 1973-74 were products of this system. The first products of the new system entered the secondary schools in September 1974. Only when they have finished will the success of the new system (5 years primary + 3 years guidance cycle, leading to 3 or 4 years secondary) become apparent.

The school year consists of 3 semesters each of about 3 months (September - December, January - March, April - June). Officially there are 32 teaching weeks, but in practice this is usually reduced by 2 weeks for examination revision, in addition to numerous public holidays, the total loss being as much as 30 days or more.

Schools officially work a 6-day week, although Thursday afternoons are often not fully utilised. Classes usually begin at about 8.30am and continue up to 4.00 or 5.00pm with a break of 2 hours or so at lunch time.

The first 8 years of education (Primary and Guidance schools) are in theory free and compulsory; in practice small fees continue to be charged and shortage of schools and especially of teachers makes attendance unenforceable, particularly in rural areas where teachers are very reluctant to serve. The small book fee (5 rials per book) levied in state schools is used to subsidise the activities of the Literacy Corps, and in most schools there are funds to help needy children with both books and clothing. Private (fee paying) schools used to be obliged by law to enrol some needy children free.

The new system has:

1 Some provision for kindergarten or pre-primary education. Until recently the prerogative of the urban rich, now free state pre-school services are expanding rapidly - especially in the rural areas where women workers are used.

2 Five years of primary education free and compulsory. In general these schools are co-educational. Promotion from grade to grade is by continuous assessment and internal annual examinations. Successful completion of five years leads to -

3 Three years of guidance school education (soon to be compulsory). These schools for pupils aged 11-14 years prepare them for different types of secondary schools. They are free except for the books but are rarely co-educational. Again promotion is by assessment and internal examination.

4 The new system has three types of secondary school. Academic, technical/vocational and comprehensive. Curricula are similar but with different emphases. They are not co-educational, compulsory or free, although state secondary schools are a lot cheaper than private ones. At the end of three or four years pupils take the final secondary school examination set on a national basis by the Ministry of Education for a diploma.

5 Higher education. Students wanting to go on to university have to have a diploma in one of four branches - Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Humanities or Home Economics and they have to sit a nationwide Konkur examination, again set by the Ministry. Only about 10% get a place at university, a further 25% of candidates get places at private colleges. The rest may enter for teacher training or the Civil Service examinations.

Others attempt to get employment with commercial firms that run their own training schemes. Most are liable for military service, to avoid it some join the Literacy Corps and a few may stay on as teachers.

5.1 Teacher training institutions cater for -

(i) kindergartens where girls only are given a one year course;

(ii) primary education - a two year course for 9th grade school graduates or a course in a tribal area college to teach children of nomadic groups;

(iii) guidance education; 19 colleges offer a two year course for secondary school leavers;

(iv) the Literacy Corps (as an alternative to military service) involves 6 months training and 18 months in the field;

(v) secondary school teachers are normally university graduates with no professional training.

5.2 Universities. There are nine universities, namely Tehran (the oldest and largest); Melli (or National, also in Tehran); Arya Mehr University of Technology, Tehran; National Teacher Training University (formerly National Teacher Training College, Daneshsaraye Ali); Pahlavi, Shiraz; Jundi Shapur, Ahwaz; Isfahan; Ferdowsi, Meshed and Azarabadigan, Tabriz. Of these Melli, Arya Mehr and Pahlavi are partially independent and the others are fully state-controlled. Pahlavi is officially English medium but all others are Farsi medium though there may be occasional teaching in English when foreign lecturers are employed. In addition, 7 new universities are projected and in various stages of planning.

Universities are financed from government funds either through the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MSHE) or directly by the Plan and Budget Organisation, although the Melli University which began as an independent institution derives much of its income from fees. They have considerable autonomy under their Boards of Trustees, chaired usually by a member of the Royal Family, which regulate the employment of academic staff and the appropriation of the budget. The Board nominates the Chancellor (the executive head) who is appointed by the Shah through the MSHE.

In addition to the existing and planned conventional universities there are a number of projects being undertaken in higher education in Iran to help alleviate the increasing demand for further education

from qualified school leavers. Amongst these projects are the Free University of Iran, the French-medium Bu Ali Sina[1] University at Hamadan, the Revolutionary Corps University[2] and the University of Work or National Industrial Training Centre.[3]

In addition to these major developments and projects in higher education in Iran there are numerous other training schemes, private and government funded. There are over 100 other institutions of higher education including technical colleges, computer science colleges, schools of nursing etc. The FUI is therefore but one more project to train suitable manpower for Iran but it is a very distinctive project and one that has tremendous potential for success.

---

1 Hamadan University. This is said to be a 'developmental' university emphasising regional needs and problems. The aim is that it should attract students from outside Tehran who will be sufficiently motivated to take their skills back to their own region and not be enticed away to the capital. There will be emphasis on practical work in the field. Much idealism has gone into the planning but it remains to be seen whether it will succeed in its aim or change radically into a conventional university. The French medium element - because of French government assistance - will be a retarding factor if it predominates (accounts vary) as much valuable time will have to be spent on inculcating a sufficient knowledge of the language to follow lectures. The British input has been restricted to assistance with the drawing up of a science syllabus.

2 A large correspondence unit was attached to the Literacy Corps Training College to help former Corps men to upgrade their qualifications and attain a college diploma (and possibly therefore a degree). This operates by correspondence but also runs summer school courses for its students. In 1975 this unit became known as the Revolutionary Corps University and facilities were extended to all teachers in Iran.

3 The University of Work. A new and interesting development in technician training is the University of Work, or National Industrial Training Centre, which has been set up by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education to train 3rd, 2nd and 1st class technicians and eventually 'industrial engineers'. When fully operational, the University of Work will accept students at different

levels of education with a minimum of 8 years schooling, and will give them a combination of general education and technical training. This scheme, based on a Belgian model, operates on a sandwich basis, years of training alternating with years of industrial experience. The course offered at each centre is closely tied to the needs of local employment and the centres are run by committees set up under the chairmanship and at the instigation of local industry. There are so far 4 branches in operation, in Tehran, Mashed, Isfahan and Kashan, but others are planned. The first intake of students has been made after entrance examination from diploma holders only and selection was highly competitive. They seem to be well motivated and the whole scheme looks promising.

PART C

## THE FREE UNIVERSITY OF IRAN

### 1. Origins

1. The Free University of Iran was established in response to the 15th Principle of the Shah - People Revolution 'higher education must be free and accessible to every Iranian'.

   The FUI seeks:

   (i) to provide the economy with experienced manpower and professional expertise

   (ii) to provide the people with more opportunities for higher education irrespective of age, sex, income, job or status, and

   (iii) to raise the general knowledge of the public, particularly in the rural areas, in scientific, cultural and environmental areas.

   In addition to these national goals the FUI aims to carry out research and to raise the quality of education and of life.

2. The FUI was established by Imperial Decree in December 1973. The Shah wished to see modern technology used in Iran's expanding higher education system, and the Ramsar Conference of 1971 resolved to undertake a study of open learning systems operating in western Europe. A multi-media distance teaching approach appeared to be practicable and offered economic advantages. An Executive Committee of Council was established in 1972 to undertake planning studies for the FUI.

   The FUI came into being in 1973 as a multi-media distance teaching system which would operate throughout Iran with a network of local study centres co-ordinated by regional headquarters and a main or central headquarters initially in Tehran.

3. At that time the only successfully operating model of such a system was the Open University in the United Kingdom. Contact was made with the UKOU and top level staff undertook study missions to consider management and system design and broadcasting, academic and media design. Following on from there

and other contacts with the UKOU a two-tier agreement was signed between the FUI and the UKOU Consultancy Service. Throughout this period assistance has been given not only in the form of UKOU personnel visiting the FUI but also FUI staff periodically undertaking training at the UKOU. Reports were prepared during this period of close co-operation on such matters as regional services, project control, management and organisation, planning and budgetary procedures, on media evaluation, on systems development and computing and on the current and projected plans for the development of the FUI.

4. While acknowledging the considerable help of UKOU in the early planning of the FUI the Chancellor, Dr Ahmadi makes it clear that the FUI has not copied the UKOU: "Although we greatly benefitted from their experience,the specific aims and objectives of the Open University, as well as the society in which it was operating and the human and physical resources available to it,were so different from ours that clearly the design of our own particular system would have to evolve according to a specifically Iranian set of requisites." (The Free University of Iran: Four Years in Review - A R Ahmadi. Paper presented at the International Association of University Presidents, Tehran, June 25th-27th 1978.)

2. Who For?

5. The rapid increase in population under 15 years of age and the equally rapid expansion of primary and secondary school systems have resulted in an overwhelming number of high school graduates seeking opportunities in higher education. Frustration on the part of both young school leavers and their parents is an important social and political factor for any government to have to reckon with.

6. The FUI has in part been established to expand opportunities for young Iranians to pursue higher education. Although there is no age limit for qualified applicants the majority of the current intake are in the school leaving age range, ie 17 years to early twenties.

They have to possess a high school diploma (in any field).

They have to pass the FUI entrance examination.

An attempt is being made by the FUI to enrol at least 25% women for one of the programmes it offers (Teacher Education). In both the Teacher Education Programme and Health Science Programme which are currently operational an attempt is being made to acheive a 25% enrolment of students who possess experience related to their chosen field of study.

7. Data from Najafabad shows that about 30% of registered students are women, that virtually all students in the Teacher Education Programme (TEP) are actively employed teachers, and that of the students in the Health Sciences Programme (HSP) half the women and two thirds of the men are unemployed. The employed students in the HSP include nurses, social workers, teachers, and technicians working in High Schools or hospitals. The unemployed students appear to be largely school leavers. Some of them are, by their own admission, studying for an FUI degree to obtain deferment of national service. If they succeed in getting a degree, they will automatically get a commission when they do do their national service. Iran operates a kind of 'contract' free-education system. The contract seems to be that in return for free tuition (and also a living allowance for the unemployed of some £54/month while studying) a student contracts to take employment with the government for two years for every year of study.

8. We can therefore surmise that, on the basis of the programmes currently being offered, the FUI's target population are the literate, school diploma holders, aged 17-20 years who are unemployed but would have been eligible for a place at a conventional university, or people already engaged in employment (education and health) wishing to upgrade their qualifications. However the FUI also intends to run programmes for technicians, nurses and for the general public. The student profile for such courses will obviously be very different from that so far developed. Only when more data has been analysed on student intake will we know how varied the target population will be.

3. What Courses?

9. It is proposed for the first ten years of operation the FUI will concentrate on training the manpower most needed by the nation in its development. The FUI uses the concept of an academic programme which is a grouping of courses designed to lead to a specific academic degree or qualification. At present the FUI offers two such 'programmes' and is planning three others. Students register for a 'programme', not for specific courses.

In developing these programmes two guidelines are kept in mind.

- to train highly efficient personnel who will be able to work in their field without long in-service training
- to train polyvalent manpower to meet the varying demands of particular professions along with Iran's changing needs.

In planning these and other programmes the procedure was as follows:

(i) a basic research study undertaken to determine national needs in related fields by the university's planning group

(ii) priorities established on the basis of this research

(iii) objectives for instruction outlined and a body of instruction prepared in time-programmed units. Preparation of these units is the task of each faculty supported by the university's technical, production and administrative departments.

10. So far five academic programmes have been considered: Teacher Education, Health Sciences, Public Education, Rural Development and Technician Training.

11. The Teacher Education Programme leading to a BA degree started in February 1978. Initially it will prepare maths and science teachers at BA level for secondary schools. Later the curriculum will expand to include courses in humanities, social science, foreign languages, culture and arts. In accordance with the first guideline above students taking this programme are expected to undertake increasing amounts of practical

training in classroom situations. Following the second guideline this (and other) programmes are concentrating on an inter-disciplinary approach. This has been emphasised in order to eliminate repetition of common areas within subjects and to prevent graduates from being limited to a single field. It is seen in Iran as being more economical to train such inter-disciplinary personnel. This programme is aimed both at secondary school graduates training as teachers and existing non-graduate teachers. An emphasis is also being placed on training teachers for the less developed regions of Iran and of developing the teacher in these areas as a community leader. The Teacher Training Programme will offer specialist courses in: Maths and Physics, Physics and Chemistry, Biology and Geology. The programme is for four years and requires completion of 256 course units. Full-time students who plan to finish in four years must study 30 hours per week (ie 2 course units per week) for 128 weeks.

The programme comprises: Basic courses (60 units), Specialist courses (156 units), General courses (40 units) (including humanities, social science and English).

12. Health Sciences Programme. Begun in February 1978 this programme was constructed on the basis of research studies which defined the most essential health care needs of the country, in particular of the rural areas. The research also focused on major socio-health and disease problems in Iran. The same guidelines were observed and an integral element of this programme is the laboratory and clinical work which increases as students progress through the programme. The same inter-disciplinary approach has been used with courses on psychology and human relations, hygiene education, environmental health, nutrition, anatomy, microbiology, pharmacology etc. Maximum efforts have been made to offer theoretical, laboratory and clinical components to students in an integrated manner. The programme aims to instill a practical competence in

    - the prevention of disease health problems
    - improvement of health standards through providing better hygiene and sanitation conditions and making

people more aware of dangers at work and at home
- diagnosing common diseases and offering initial treatment under supervision of doctors
- administration of health programmes
- organisation and maintenance of rehabilitation programmes
- supervision of lower cadre health staff

Students taking this programme will have to do in year 1 64 units in two semesters (32 weeks). Years 2 and 3, 64 units plus 12 hours per week practical laboratory work and health care training. Year 4 covers three semesters (48 weeks). In the first semester students do 24 theoretical units, 12 hours practical training per week, attend conferences and seminars related to other specialist courses eg humanities. In the second and third semesters they do 30 hours practical training per week.

13. English language is common to both programmes currently being offered: 'Society and Health' and 'The Ascent of Man' (Bronowski) are offered in Health Sciences and 'Basic Science' and Mathematics in Teacher Education - making five courses in all. 'Society and Health' and 'Basic Science' have home experiment kits.

14. Each 'course' lasts sixteen weeks and comprises sixteen 'units'. Two units of study successfully undertaken earns one 'credit'. Each unit represents 10-15 hours of study time. The FUI's 'year' comprises two semesters each of sixteen 'study weeks'. A student can study one or two courses at a time. Therefore, the maximum rate of progress is four courses per year consisting of sixty-four units earning thirty-two credits. A 'degree' is awarded when a student has accumulated 128 credits. It will therefore take a minimum of four years to obtain a degree.

15. Second, third and fourth 'level' or 'year' courses are being prepared for both current programmes.

16. Less advanced are the programmes in Public Education, Rural Development and Technician Training. The Public Education Programme does not lead to any qualification but is aimed at providing continuous education to the general public, an important goal of FUI. The Programme is being designed to keep people aware of the wide ranging changes and developments in Iranian society. Anyone interested can purchase the related books and materials and can listen to the broadcasts. The first course is concerned with environmental and social crises in Iran and has adopted an inter-disciplinary social science and pure science approach. It is called Living Environment Know-How. Another course, History of Iran emphasises important historical events as well as customs and culture. Again it has adopted an inter-disciplinary approach and comprises units on religion, literature, arts, social conditions, politics and history. This course, in keeping with its place in the Public Education Programme, emphasises the ability to think through the implications of the material presented rather than memorising facts. Radio and television programmes are used in this course.

17. The Rural Development Programme is aimed at improving life in the rural areas. Graduates from villages are expected to be trained as local leaders and animateurs. This 4 year course leads to a BA in Rural Development.

18. The Technician Training Programme is being prepared for 1979. For the moment the course team are concentrating on training technicians in electronics and industrial chemistry in response to manpower planning needs.

19. All the courses prepared by the FUI staff will be offered each semester so that students can take the combination of courses they need for their programmes at their own pace.

    In Year 1 only five courses have been offered in two programmes. Gradually more courses will be available so that by the steady state phase each programme will offer 16 courses or 260 units.

4. What Media and Methods?

20. FUI has adopted the concept of central headquarters where learning materials are designed and created and a distribution network, comprising regional and local study centres, which delivers these educational materials over long distances.

21. The FUI uses several media but the primary component is printed texts, taking various forms from text books to work-books. TV and radio programmes play a supportive role and are broadcast over the NIRT network. The FUI copies these programmes on to video and audio cassettes for use in the Local Study Centres. Films and slides are also being considered useful learning aids and laboratory experiment kits have been developed for some science courses.

22. The media are selected by each course team on the basis of the learning approach decided on. No one mode of instruction dominates, different techniques are being tried. The teaching strategy is based on a course usually divided into 16 units spread over a 24 week period; the course comprises all the learning material the student needs plus student activities like examinations, self assessment questions and marked assign-ments.

23. The teaching materials are designed, sequenced and presented with distance students in mind in order to maintain motivation and ensure that students have mastered each section. Objectives are used to help students assess their own progress. The printed materials are unit-timed and are supplemented with guides, reference aids and broadcast/cassette material. Students study these packages at home and in the Local Study Centre; laboratory kits are used both at home and in the Centres where students also use other equipment, talk to their tutors and use the multi-media libraries.

24. Face-to-face contact with tutors is seen as a method of creating the necessary groundwork for behavioural changes. Practical training and on-the-job training sessions are employed to enable students to acquire the necessary skills and to demon-strate the practical application of their theoretical work.

5. Course Creation

25. Programmed printed texts are prepared and compiled by central academic university course teams. These teams are responsible to the appropriate Programme Director and comprise subject matter specialists, an educational technologist, a producer/director from NIRT, graphicist, editor and other technical experts as necessary. They rely on mutual co-operation to produce the materials. In practice the educational technologists' role has been difficult to operationalise and the imput has been abandoned.

The course team first assesses the entrance ability of the target population; the units are then discussed, outlined and sequenced. Three drafts are produced and revised prior to handover to the printers. The first draft concentrates on getting the subject material down satisfactorily. The second draft includes all the student assessment questions and tests and the third draft is the edited and revised version of this. Each unit is field tested in Tehran and problems are communicated to the course team for revision. Each unit is also externally evaluated before delivery. Course teams also evaluate their courses through the student assessment results, and they play a role when necessary in resolving difficulties at Local Study Centres.

26. Broadcast material is prepared by the producer/directors from NIRT Educational TV who are supposed to work closely with the course team. The procedure for preparing a television or radio programme is as follows:

- The special objectives of the course are reviewed, then the objectives of each unit and the printed texts are considered at each draft stage. The most suitable sections of each course are highlighted for preparation as broadcast materials.
- An overall design of broadcasts is undertaken.
- A time schedule for all programmes is drawn up.
- Initial or draft scripts are prepared and revised.
- Final scripts are prepared.
- Academic/scientific content is approved and agreed.

- Programmes are produced and recorded.
- Each programme is broadcast twice on the national network.

27. Home Experiment Kits: Dr Ahmadi explains how home experiment kits are developed at the FUI - "During the design and development stage of each course unit, a specific list of objectives and skills is determined. Each concept or skill which students must master creates the need for a procedure to teach and test that ability. Particularly in the Health Sciences Programme, and in other scientific and technical training programmes, these procedures require practical experience with laboratory and technical materials and equipment, and frequently result in the development of a 'kit' which contains all the elements required by students during the course. The course team specifies the necessary experiments or procedures to be performed by students. Their specifications are then forwarded to the appropriate kit design unit which designs and produces a prototype model and sends it back to the course team for approval. Each kit is designed to provide the materials for all the experiments required for the entire course. For example, the first year science kit includes all the necessary items for 23 individual experiments, 16 of which are mandatory for successful completion of the course. Careful consideration is taken of the students' environment and limited access to materials, and strong emphasis is placed on the complete nature of the kit design and assembly. The prototype is then sent back to the originating course team for final approval after which the kit is sent to the Kit Production Unit".

6. Course Production

28. Text production: After preparation and approval of the final draft of each course unit by the course team the texts go through the following production stages:

(i) the final draft is edited; the editor's role is to make the contents clear and precise as well as gramatically correct in Persian or English

(ii) all diagrams, photographs or illustrations are discussed and finalised with the designer responsible for the course

(iii) all of these elements are sent to the printer who prepares galley proofs for inspection by the editor, designer and the academic author

(iv) a camera-ready version is then prepared and photographed and if the entire unit passes with approval, the litho plates are prepared and sent to press.

29. The editing illustration and layout of all the university printed material is carried out at the Editorial and Design Department and the printing is done by the Free University Press.

30. Franklin Books Company ( a non-profit making company from USA which translated US books into Farsi and marketed them in Iran for many years) was adopted as a subcontract printer by the FUI. Franklin Books 'transformed' FUI materials, edited, illustrated and printed them before the contract and liaison with the UKOU. Since then more emphasis has been placed on the desirability of designers and editors working in closer co-operation with academic authors. The FUI now has a controlling interest (60%) in the Franklin Book Company, renamed the Free University Press, and prints all its own text materials to a very high technical standard indeed.

31. Broadcast and audio-visual production: FUI radio and television programmes are produced in co-operation with the National Iranian Radio and Television's Educational Radio and Television Division (ETV). All the production facilities and technical staff are provided by ETV and producer-directors are assigned to FUI course teams. An agreement exists between NIRT and the FUI to the effect that recording and production are done at NIRT (ETV) studios where there are excellent production facilities and equipment, but there is no budget transfer of cash which means FUI has little control over NIRT. Since the

NIRT have little experience in adult education (unlike BBC/OU production staff in the UKOU) and producers are not graduates in the relevant fields, liaison between NIRT producers and FUI academic course teams has not been at all adequately developed. In theory the producer-director's participation in the design and development of each programme begins very early on at course team level. In practice this close co-operation has not often happened.

32. All other media eg 16mm films, video and audio cassettes, slide and photo series and slide-tape programmes are made by the Broadcasting and Media Centre (BMC) division of FUI. The BMC employs a wide range of media specialists who are also supposed to work in close co-operation with course teams to facilitate integration of the different elements of each course. Dr Ahmadi explains a new tendency of FUI course teams to rely less and less on the NIRT services "because of limitations and the cumbersome nature of the production process there has been a marked redirection of interest from so-called "big media" to "little media". "Little media" are proving to be as, if not more, effective than "big media" in many respects. They are less expensive and complicated to produce and to use, and they are educationally effective for many learning tasks that traditionally have been ascribed to "big media" . . . Each of these factors in addition to the fact that in the near future the broadcast demands of FUI will far outstrip the broadcast time slots allotted to FUI have contributed to this reduction."

    It is the author's opinion that there is a further factor, that of the ability of the NIRT and FUI course team members to work together. This calls into question the whole idea of adopting the course team model, (developed at the UKOU) in a cultural context very different from the UK and in one which the close contractual relationship of the UKOU and the BBC is not mirrored in Iran.

7. Course Distribution

33. The distribution of FUI course materials can be divided into two systems -

(i) Delivery of printed materials and audio-visual aids and kits.

(ii) Broadcasting of TV and radio programmes.

34. Delivery: The physical geography of Iran (see Part A) presents innumerable problems to delivering course materials on time to the most appropriate points. Population is dispersed, distances immense, the weather particularly in winter creates further hazards: snow falls and frosts block roads in many areas and melt waters damage the surfaces. In planning a distribution network the FUI chose to involve as few steps as possible, so the central headquarters delivers direct via a university transport system both to the regional and local centres on a regularly scheduled basis. This has reduced dependence on an already inadequate and unreliable national postal system and on the need for local deliveries. The final part of the distribution system is in the hands of the students themselves. They collect their course materials during registration at the local study centres. All texts and printed course materials, health and science kits and audio-visual materials are either included in the tuition or sold to students at or below production cost.

35. Broadcasting: The television and radio programmes are transmitted NIRT nationwide. In 1978 the transmission load of FUI programmes was about 1 hour six days a week for TV and 1 to 2 hours per week for radio.

It is estimated that by 1983 this transmission load will grow to 6 - 10 hours six days a week in each medium. Clearly such a demand for transmission time cannot be accommodated hence the move towards using "little media" and the plan to develop the cassette replay facilities in all the study centres. At present cassettes are available for students who miss the original or repeat transmissions of programmes by NIRT.

8. Student Admission and Registration

36. The criteria for admission were designed to maintain academic credibility and to reflect the university's aims. In order to qualify, a student must:

(i) possess a high school diploma (in any field)

(ii) pass the FUI entrance examination run by the National Testing Service which is responsible for admission and which holds the examination biennially at the local study centres

(iii) live within one hour's travelling time (by locally available transport) of a centre.

37. Students may register on a part- or full-time basis. Women are encouraged especially in the Teacher Education Programme. There is no age limit for qualified applicants. The names of accepted students are announced in the newspapers and at the local study centres. The successful applicants register at their local centres and select their courses with the help of tutors. They are then given their course materials.

38. Full-time students can register in each of the two semesters for a maximum of 32 course units (each unit = 15 hours study time). Most of the university programmes also require students to spend time in doing practical work (in schools for the Teacher Training Programme, in health centres for the Health Sciences Programme). These practical sessions are planned in advance and timetables are given to students with the guidebooks and broadcast schedules. Full-time students must study at least two foundation courses related to their specialist programme in the first year. (These two courses are included in the total 32 course units and are chosen with the help of the tutor). Students can sign up for each course unit according to their progress in previous units. Students are considered to be full-time if they register for more than 16 units in a semester. Only full-time students can be exempt from military service or qualify for educational allowances, jobs or scholarships offered by the Ministry for Science and Higher Education or other government agencies. FUI is free to students who agree to serve their country on completion of their studies for an equivalent number of years. Otherwise students can pay fees set by the

Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

39. The Study Year: The first semester runs from February to July and is made up of one week registration and counselling, sixteen study weeks, one week national holiday (Nowruz), one week FUI holiday and one week of examinations. There are then two weeks of holiday followed by the start of the second semester which is similar to the first but without Nowruz. The year therefore looks as follows (the second half being flexible at present):

| | |
|---|---|
| Jan. | No studies |
| Feb. | 1 week registration and counselling |
| | 2 weeks study |
| Mar. | 3 weeks study |
| | 2 weeks holiday (including Nowruz) |
| Apr. | |
| May. | |
| Jun. | 11 weeks study |
| Jul. | |
| Jul. | Final examinations |
| Jul. | 2 weeks holiday |
| Aug. | |
| Aug. or Sep. | 1 week registration and counselling |
| Aug. | |
| Sep. | |
| Oct. | 16 weeks study and |
| Nov. | 2 weeks mid-semester holiday |
| Dec. | |
| Jan. | |

40. Numbers of students. Each of the 14 local centres registered 100 students for the first semester of 1978. There were therefore 1400 students in the system. Twenty new local centres are planned for the second semester of 1978, then a further 2000 students will be registered, making a total of some 3000 students in the system allowing for drop-out. The FUI plans to build up student numbers to about 1000 per local centre and the number of centres to fifty. Assuming all goes well there will therefore be about 50,000 students in the system in the steady state. For economic reasons this 50,000 may well be pushed up to about 100,000 - but this is conjecture.

41. Of the 100 students registered at each centre in February 1978, one half entered the Health Sciences Programme and one half the Teacher Education Programme. However, no other quota system was used. Consequently, for the two centres for which there is information the distribution of students among courses is very uneven. Eg.

| | Shakrekord Local Centre[+] | | Najafabad Local Centre[+] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Registered | Drop-out* | Registered | Drop-out* |
| English | 91 | 4 | 93 | 4 |
| Maths | 49 | 18 | 44 | 6 |
| Basic Sciences | 2 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Ascent of Man | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Society & Health | 47 | 0 | 49 | 0 |
| Total Student Courses | 189 | | 200 | |

*May 1978

[+]SLC 97 students registered. NLC 100

Footnote: The numerical information given above was culled by asking questions. It is not yet available in the form of overall survey statistics.

It is therefore clear that, by and large, Health Science students chose 'English' and 'Society and Health' and Teachers chose 'English' and 'Maths'. (A student taking the Ascent of Man course must also take the Basic Sciences course, but not vice-versa.)

42. So far, and in general, drop out has been very low, examination results good and morale high. The Mathematics course is causing very considerable difficulties for many students - both tutors and students claim that the course is pitched at too high a level and is too different from traditional maths for a first course at the FUI. Kits have not been very successful - but the reasons for this were not made clear; lack of training of tutors was quoted as one reason.

9. Student Support

43. The general organisation and direction of the Local Study Centres (which are the principal sources of support for students in their learning) comes under one of the four Vice-Chancellors, (V-C, 'Local Study Centres'), based in Tehran.

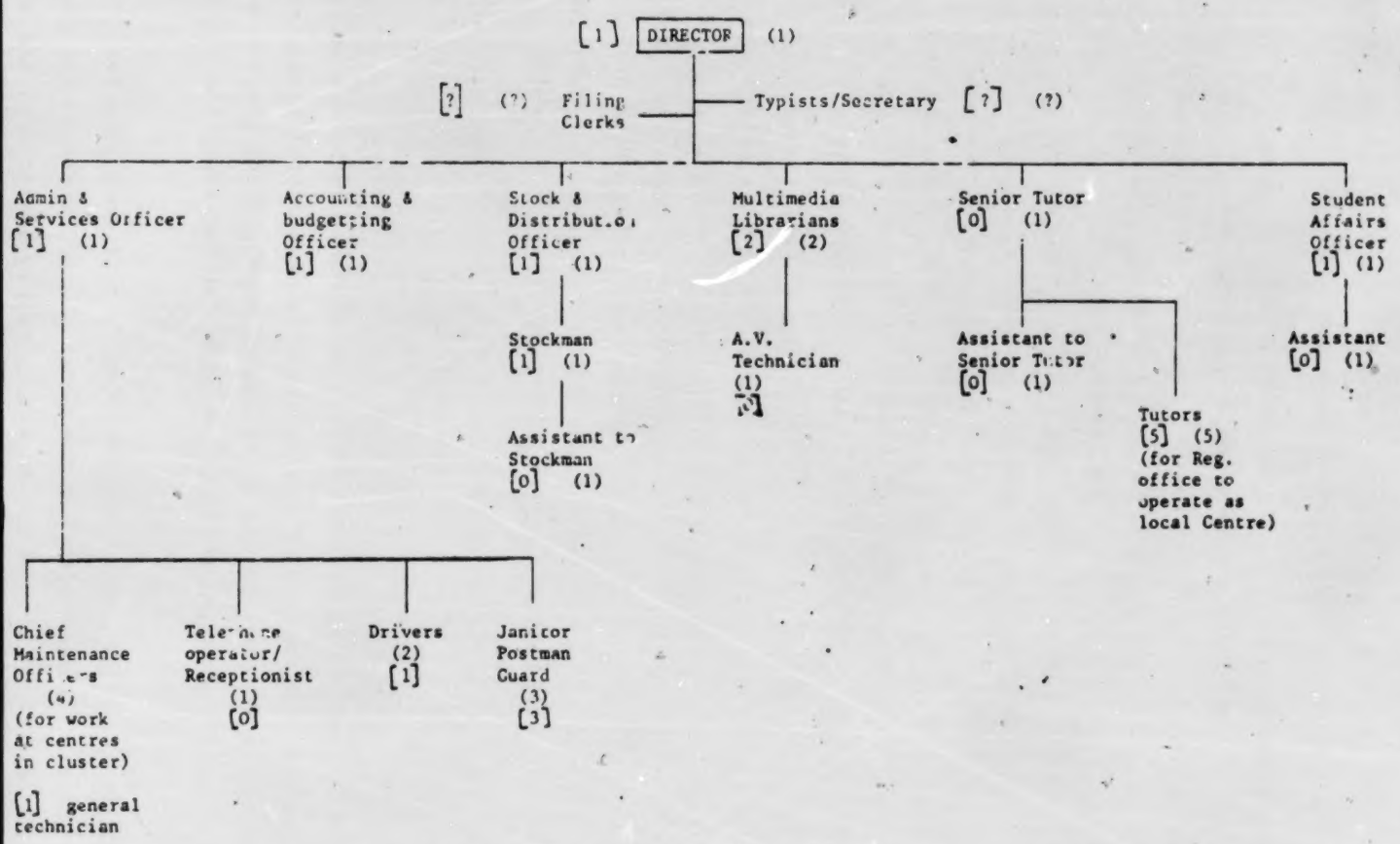
The general pattern of organisation is for a Regional Office (which itself also operates as a local centre) to 'synchronise' or 'co-ordinate' the operation of 5-10 Local Centres clustered around it. At the present time there are fourteen Local Study Centres, three of which combine with Regional Offices. Six new Centres will be opened in August 1978. The FUI states that each of these six will be doubling up as 'Regional Offices'. All this probably means is that they will be dispersed over too wide an area and too far from existing Regional Offices to be linked to one or other of the latter, or for any group of them to be clustered. There will eventually be 40-50 Local Study Centres altogether.

44. Staffing patterns and structure: Regional Offices and Local Study Centres have the same general establishment structure - a director, an administrative and services officer, an accounting and budgeting officer, a stock and distribution officer, librarians, tutors and a student affairs officer. The Regional Office staff are (in the posts listed above) simply more senior and have more assistants in order to cope with 'synchronising' the cluster of Local Study Centres.

The general organisational structure is shown in the accompanying diagram.

45. As can be inferred from paragraphs 43 and 44 above, the teaching system at the university is based on a three-tiered hierarchy of centres. At one end of the spectrum is the central headquarters, at the other end are the Local Study Centres which are the main point of contact with the student. Between the two stand the Regional Centres.

46. Regional Centres: Each Regional Centre is responsible for the supervision and support of the Local Study Centres in the region. The role of the Regional Centres is mainly operational and administrative although it can offer limited academic support. Student


[1] DIRECTOR (1)
[?] (?) Filing Clerks
Typists/Secretary [?] (?)
Admin & Services Officer [1] (1)
Accounting & budgetting Officer [1] (1)
Stock & Distribution Officer [1] (1)
Multimedia Librarians [2] (2)
Senior Tutor [0] (1)
Student Affairs Officer [1] (1)
Stockman [1] (1)
Assistant to Stockman [0] (1)
A.V. Technician (1)
Assistant to Senior Tutor [0] (1)
Tutors [5] (5) (for Reg. office to operate as local Centre)
Assistant [0] (1)
Chief Maintenance Officers (4) (for work at centres in cluster)
[1] general technician
Telephone operator/ Receptionist (1) [0]
Drivers (2) [1]
Janitor Postman Guard (3) [3]

FUI Regional and Local Centres - General organisational structure/full-time staff

(X) Number of people at Regional Office

[Y] Number of people at Local Centre

administration is divided between the three centres, at Isfahan, Fezaiyeh and Mashed. The most important functions of the Regional Centres are:

(i) student administration

(ii) organising entrance examinations (though the exams will be taken at Local Study Centres)

(iii) transportation and supervision of the distribution of course materials. In the future the Regional Centres may supervise the broadcast of radio and television (if they are transmitted locally)

(iv) maintaining the Local Study Centres and equipment

(v) organising and running summer schools, lectures and activities not included in the usual programme

They will eventually have a team of tutors and senior counsellors to support the tutors and counsellors in the Local Study Centres. Regional Centres are also supposed to play an important role in the expansion of local centres, hiring and training personnel.

47. Local Study Centres - Premises. The local learning centre is an important element in the FUI system. The ultimate aim is to cover the country with a network of 40-50 centres including the Regional Offices. In the first year of operation 14 of these Local Study Centres were built. There has been some delay and confusion in constructing more of these centres and in some cases local communities have self-financed and built them, revealing a deep interest among local citizens in having them. In most cases the Local Study Centres also serve a community service function, often being the only centre available in a village.

Eventually, each centre will be purpose-built to serve firstly as an FUI base, secondly as a local community centre. The general design will be standard but there will be small local modifications. The standard design in use at present was produced at the FUI HQ in Tehran over two years ago - that is, before most of the policy decisions affecting the staffing and operation of Local Study Centres had been taken. The building costs about £120,000 to put up.

It is already clear that the standard building is much too small, and in certain respects unsuitable for the FUI's own requirements as well as for serving a dual purpose. However, relatively few have been built and new designs are being produced.

When the FUI started its pilot experiment with 240 students at four centres in October 1977, it had to use hired accommodation - new houses or blocks of flats - at phenomenally high rates. When the main programme started (1400 students at fourteen centres) in February 1978 the situation was much the same. (One local centre, at Shahreza, is rather beautifully laid out in an old caravanserai!) In view of the smallness of the purpose-built centres and of the rather steep rise in numbers of students expected over the next few years, the pattern of rented accommodation plus standard buildings seems likely to persist for several years. This will pose quite a few logistical problems since the two types of accommodation can only rarely be close to one another.

It is intended that each centre will be well equipped. At present existing centres have a library (a joint FUI/community facility) five Singer Caramates, five radio receivers, five videotape players with TV sets, and a film projector. For the Health Sciences a German binocular microscope, centifruges, baby scales, resuscitation apparatus, an examination couch have been provided. The general science area has all the facilities for students to use their "kits" effectively. The main hall is well-equipped for concerts, drama, etc. The FUI initially budgetted to build the centres out of central funds, and where it thought they would be most effective. However, a remarkable phenomenon occurred. Communities all over Iran started to offer to donate land and raise building funds locally with the objective of inducing the FUI to establish a centre for them. They were now competing with one another for the potential educational opportunities the FUI holds out. This has proved a mixed blessing for the FUI. On the one hand it has had to accommodate centres in some places which were not planned for, and in some instances the local funding has not come

quickly enough or in sufficient quantity for building programmes. How the money for enlarging centre buildings will be raised is not yet clear.

48. Local Study Centres - Staffing: Each centre has a tutor for every academic subject being offered. Tutors provide guidance and counselling, some face-to-face discussion and they run practical sessions and are full-time. Tutors may also where necessary provide guidance on social and family problems affecting their students ability to progress satisfactorily. To be accepted by a centre students have to live not more than one hours travelling time from it. Students in general study at home. Many are from middle-class families and have an adequate study environment.

Study Centre tutors are graduates but their role is not to impart education per se. They have a three-fold role.

(i) They are required to act as catalysts, fostering a spirit, and an ability in their students to solve their own academic problems. They help the students with academic and instructional problems in all elements of the course material. They supervise practical and clinical training. They are supposed to instruct students how to use the multi-media resources of the centres, and to promote inter-student activity. In general they are to be supportive, building up morale and encouraging individuals to use their initiative.

(ii) They form the link between student and central academics and as such they have administrative and evaluative roles to play. They keep records on each student's progress, they supervise, mark and comment on student tests and forward assessment results to course teams explaining problems and views of students and they make analytical comments of relevance on the course material particularly where recurrent problems of clarity, interpretations etc have arisen.

(iii) Finally, tutors may need to act as counsellors helping students with non-subject related problems which may be related to his difficulties in studying at a distance eg incorrect selections of courses or planning efficient

use of time or maybe personal/family problems which affect his concentration, and hinder his progress.

As tutor/counsellor the tutor has to maintain informative files on counselling sessions and decisions made. These are useful for analysing academic progress and drop-out/failure rates.

If the student finds it difficult to communicate with his tutor he can approach the director of the local centre.

There were some problems with the initial selection of tutors; not all were of sufficiently high quality, but the second selection of applicants has been notably better, probably because academics are now satisfied that the FUI is a feasible idea!

49. Staffing levels in the future: Assuming that there will eventually be 50 centres including 7 'regional' ones, with 1000-2000 students each, and sufficient full-time and part-time tutors to cope with a variety of multi-course programmes at several levels, then implications for full-time staffing on the present pattern are alarming. There are 5 full-time tutors per centre at present (1 for each course). If, in moving from 100 students/centre to 1000/centre, the number of full-time tutors only doubles (the workload being relieved, say, by part-time staff) then the total number of full-time staff in the regions for fifty centres will be around 2,500. In addition, because living conditions are so primitive outside the main cities and towns, the FUI is going to have to build high quality housing for its regional staff in (probably) most of its centres. It may also have to pay salaries well over the odds, too, to get good people to live in such areas.

The capital building costs for the regions alone could well reach £50,000,000 and salary costs per annum about £7,000,000 - £10,000,000. These figures are reasonable guesstimates.

The main conclusion from this seems to be that the criterion of relative cost-effectiveness of DLS over traditional systems will probably be irrelevant in Iran. There will be no comparison to be made since the two systems will simply not be regarded as alternatives.

10. Assessment and Examination

50. Assessment can be divided into three types at the FUI: self-assessment, continuous assessment and examinations.

51. Self-assessment: the student is given questions in the body of the course materials which require him to stop and think or undertake an activity which he can assess or mark himself on the basis of answers given by the author. Self-assessment for the student is considered as an integral element in the course material produced at the FUI. The use of such questions aims to improve the learning techniques of students and encourage them to make better use of FUIs instructional material.

52. Continuous assessment: takes the form of assignments set within the context of the course materials but this time marked by the tutors. Grades for such assignments play an important role in accreditation.

53. Examinations: formal examinations are taken at the Local Study Centres based on course materials and marked by FUI staff.

54. The results of students' assignments and examinations are analysed at central headquarters by computer and records for each student are kept on file. Comparative results may be sent to students, tutors and FUI officials. The results of student assessment are to be evaluated to help course teams revise the course materials.

11. Organisation and Administration

55. Iranian Universities are, since 1967, autonomous bodies governed by a Board of Trustees which controls staffing, finance and the budget. Chancellors are nominated by the Board of Trustees but appointed by the Shah. The FUI has a Board of Trustees to which the Chancellor is responsible.

56. There are four major university committees:

(i) University Council, the decision making body and the most important of the committees. The Council consists of the Chancellor (as Chairman), the Vice-Chancellors, the Deans of Faculties, Director of the Institute of Educational Technology (IET), three members of staff from the Directors of Centres or Units in the Central Headquarters, the Director of Project Control and Management Information and the Directors of the Regional Centres.

(ii) Planning and Co-ordination Committee which is responsible for co-ordinating the major planning activities, both long and short term. The Committee is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research); the Vice-Chancellor (Operations); the Directors of the various Educational Programmes; the Director of the Manpower Planning Centre; the Director of the Budget and Program Control Centre; the Director of the Technical Services Centre; the Director of the IET; the Director of the Project Control and Management Information Office and two other Directors chosen by the Council.

(iii) The Academic and Research Council is responsible for the co-ordination of all decisions relevant to teaching and research. The Chancellor chairs this Council of Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research), the Deans of the Faculties, the Director of the IET, the Directors of the Educational Programmes, two Department Directors, two academics appointed by the Chancellor and representatives of the academic staff.

(iv) Educational Programmes Executive Committee. A series of FUI courses is called an educational 'programme'. Each programme has a Programme Director proposed by the Academic and Research Council and appointed by the Chancellor. The Director is responsible for drafting the detailed contents of the educational programme for approval by the Council. Each programme also has an Educational Executive Committee chaired by the Director with chairmen of course teams and Deans of the Faculties concerned with the programme.

57. Apart from these committees various areas of the FUI report directly to the Chancellor.

Manpower Planning and Development Centre
Budget and Programme Control Centre
Project Control and Management Information Office
Public and International Relations Office
Technical Services Centre

58. Four Vice-Chancellors assist the Chancellor:

(i) Vice-Chancellor Academic and Research, responsible for the co-ordination and supervision of all academic, educational and research activities and student affairs. The academic areas of the FUI include five schools: Basic Science and Technology, Life Science, Education, Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences; the IET and the Library.

(ii) Vice-Chancellor Planning and Operations is responsible for all the activities and operations involved in transforming and distributing the work of the FUI academic staff, this includes the production of printed material, its distribution, the development of audio-visual materials, student registration, certification and administration, the provision of physical and technical facilities. The Operations area of the FUI includes Broadcast and Media Centre; Computer and Systems Design Centre; Student Administration and Examinations; an editing, translating, copyright and printing area; equipment office and storage and distribution area.

(iii) Vice-Chancellor Administration Support Services and Staff Affairs is responsible for all the support areas needed by the FUI including administration, personnel, legal regulations. The Support Services Area includes Administration; Finance, General Services, Legal Office.

(iv) Vice-Chancellor Local Study Centres is responsible for the Regional and Local Study Centres. Regional Directors have direct links with all areas of the FUI and equivalent status to Deans of Faculties. The functions of the Regional Offices and Local Study Centres have been described.

59. In addition to the above the FUI has appointed a Director and an Executive Council for each of the programmes of study offered.

12 Control

60. Academic control of courses and their content is vested in the course teams, the Academic and Research Council and ultimately the Vice-Chancellor Academic and Research.

61. Various centres are responsible for control functions to do with Planning, Finance and Course Production. These are:

(i) the Manpower Planning and Development Centre

(ii) the Budget and Programme Control Office

(iii) the Project Control and Management Information Office.

Each of these reports directly to the Chancellor.

62. Formative Assessment and Evaluation of the FUI as a teaching system is carried in four main areas -

(i) Instructional materials evaluation, as a result of which the effectiveness of texts, kits, broadcast programmes, audio-visual supplements (each with a predetermined objective) is assessed;

(ii) Test construction, whereby the tests which have been developed for specific courses are evaluated in terms of reliability and validity and if approved, become part of the course test bank.

(iii) Institutional research, or the monitoring and evaluation of University activities at central headquarters and in the Local and Regional Centres, affecting for example:

- in service training programmes
- administrative and tutorial staff performance
- generation of admissions criteria
- student performance evaluation
- operational procedures (ie distribuiton, broadcasting and communication
- production services (ie radio and television programmes, printed materials, science and health kits).

(iv) Need assessment studies, which determine the nature of the Academic Programmes and Courses to be developed and offered by the FUI in the future.

13 Resources

63. Staffing levels in mid 1976 FUI had 367 employees, all of whom worked in the Central Headquarters in Tehran. The ratio of academics to other staff was as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Academic staff | 24% |
| Technical-Operational Staff | 29% |
| Clerical and Maintenance Staff | 47% |

In the steady state situation (with more new courses and updating of existing courses) the following ratio is anticipated:

| | |
|---|---|
| Academic Staff | 42% |
| Technical-Operation Staff | 29% |
| Clerical and Maintenance Staff | 29% |

The rate of growth in the academic areas is necessarily much higher in the first years of operation.

64. By 1978 regional support services were introduced with a minimum of 30 employees at each of the 3 regional centres opened. The ultimate staffing required at each of the Regional Centres is unknown but allowing for a growth of about 6 people in the next 5 years (36 per centre) would be approximately 252 (36 x 7 regional centres).

65. In the Local Study Centres already opened there is a non-academic staff of 15 including 6 administrators, librarians, clerical and maintenance people. In the projected 40+ Local Study Centres then there will ultimately be in the region of 600 staff. However academic staffing at these centres is governed by student levels and an estimate of 2,500 full-time academic staff has already been given (para. 49).

66. Facilities. The central headquarters of the FUI is located in Tehran in three rented office blocks in the city centre. There is a separate 1,000 square metre printing press/warehouse complex owned by the FUI and a separate editorial/library building. There were plans to build the Tehran Regional Centre offices on the outskirts of the city at Lavizan a new town development and to temporarily house the Central Headquarters there until a new complex had been built for the FUI on the Caspian littoral.

However the Lavizan project has now been abandoned and the plans for the new headquarters have also changed. Instead of a location called Ahlam adjacent to the campus of Reza-Shah-e-Kabu University, the ETV headquarters and a new town there are now plans to build a 'total environment' complex near the town of Beh Shahr. This new site will have residential, commercial recreational and educational facilities and will have a comprehensive headquarters comprising administrative and academic blocks and production facilities.